Hill Panel Checking CIA's Disclosure

3/22/76

By Warren Brown
Washington Post Staff Writer

The Senate intelligence committee is investigating Central Intelligence Agency's disclosure that Israel has 10 to 20 available nuclear weapons, committee chairman Frank Church (D-Idaho) said yesterday.

Church, who last week announced his candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination, called the CIA leak "the biggest goof in the way of leaks that I can imagine—the biggest that I've ever heard of in Washington."

He said, "Congress should investigate this leak," and added that his own committee "has already commenced an investigation."

Church made his comments in a television interview on "Issues and Answers" (ABC, WMAL).

The Washington Post reported last week that CIA officials revealed at a cocktail party for Washington-area science writers that Israel has an estimated 10 to 20 nuclear weapons "ready and available for use." The article was written for The Post by Arthur Kranish, editor of Science Trends, a Washington-based newsletter. Kranish was one of the writers attending the CIA party.

"Can you imagine how a leak of that kind would have been treated if it had come out of the Congress of the United States" Church asked.

Congressional ability to keep state secrets has become suspect lately because of the recent publication of the House intelligence committee's report on the CIA in The Village Voice, New York weekly.

Church said he would "take action" to reduce leaks if he became President.

The senator said committees that now must be notified about cover intelligence operations represent half the Congress.

"That's a highly insecure arrangement," said Church. "We ought to have one intelligence oversight committee that will be the single depository of this (intelligence) information, and then we (in Congress) will be just as secure as the executive branch."

Another Democratic presidential candidate, Fred Harris, said yesterday he is looking to the April 23 Pennsylvania primary to give his badly sagging campaign a lift.

"We are hoarding our money, our resources and our workers and we are going full-time into Pennsylvania," Harris said on the "Face the Nation" (CBS, WTOP).

Harris added that he would remain in the race even if he runs poorly in Pennsylvania.